

ADVENTURE

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short story:

A SHERIFF FOR MURDER TOWN	Jack Ritchie	16
THE CAPTIVE OF DEVIL'S SWAMP	Talmage Powell	32
I RIDE BY NIGHT	H. A. DeRosso	38
GUN LAP	Hugh Gordon	46

novel:

A SWORD FOR RICHARD	Fred Humiston	24
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picture stories:

STREET OF THE LOST ONES	David Morrison	20
A JOY TO BEHOLD	Peale Howe	27
TIGER OF THE RIVER	Roy P. Rainey	42

articles:

THEY DIED ALONE	Arch Whitehouse	13
DOES SEX FRIGHTEN YOU	Thorp McClusky	18
THE DAY DEATH CAME TO TRENTON	Ed Dieckmann, Jr.	36
WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT WOMEN	Raymond Traffarn	40

features:

ADVENTURES IN MEDICINE	J. R. Gaver	8
THESE WERE THE BRAVE		35
CASE OF THE GILDED NICKEL	Stuart James	62
IT'S OUR FAVORITE SPORT	John Winters Fleming	83
SOUTH SEAS SEXTANT	Murray T. Pringle	87

departments:

CAMPFIRE		6
ASK ADVENTURE		10
ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS		78

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A Sheriff for MURDER TOWN

The usual pay for a sheriff in Boone Mesa after a month was a six-by-three plot of ground—and another notch on a boothill gun

The knock at the door of his hotel room brought O'Rourke out of his doze. He slipped into his boots and went to answer it.

Two men stood in the hall, both of them conservatively dressed. The thin, heavy-browed man hooked a thumb in his vest pocket. "Mr. O'Rourke?"

"Yes." O'Rourke was tall and dark-haired. He had an easy leanness about him and a permanent wry glimmer in his eyes.

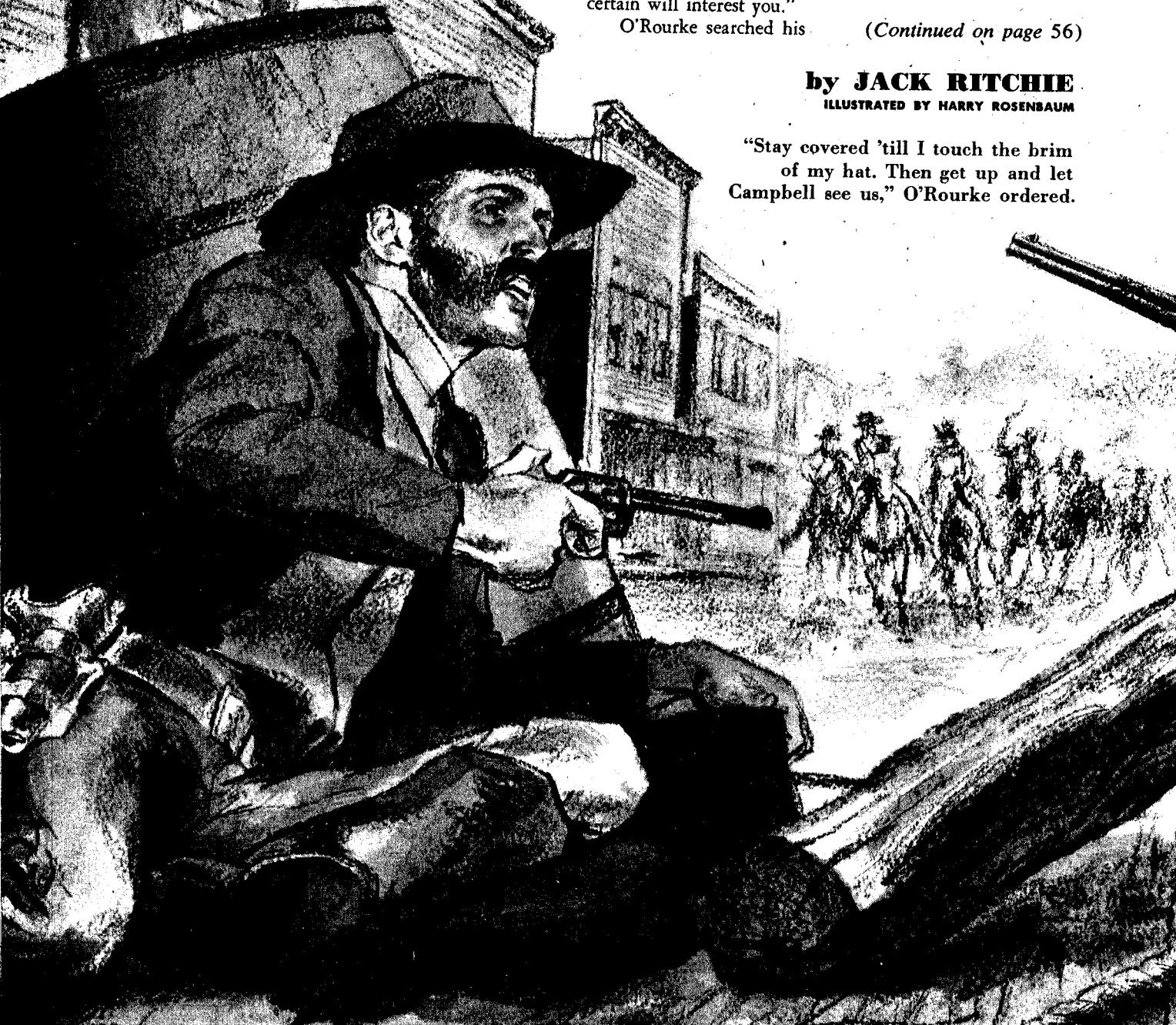
"Do you mind if we come in? We have something that we are certain will interest you."

O'Rourke searched his (Continued on page 56)

by JACK RITCHIE

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRY ROSENBAUM

"Stay covered 'till I touch the brim of my hat. Then get up and let Campbell see us," O'Rourke ordered.





A SHERIFF FOR MURDER TOWN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

pockets for a sulphur match and lit the lamp against the late afternoon dusk. "I'd like to point out that I'm O'Rourke. Not Jed or Cletus."

The heavy-browed man nodded amiably. "But you are related?"

"We're brothers."

The thin man smiled with satisfaction. "I am Lucius Culver, the owner of the Mercantile here in Boone Mesa." He indicated the short, plump man with resigned gloom on his pink face. "And this is Mr. Perkins, our mayor."

Culver waited until they shook hands. "We, sir, represent the reputable, the honest citizens of this community." He halted with a trace of uncertainty. "Did you say Henry?"

O'Rourke nodded and grinned slightly.

Culver rubbed his chin. "Well, Hank, we knew you come from good fighting stock." A glow came into his eyes. "I've heard the stories of how your brother Jed cleaned out Childress and San Benito and how Cletus outgunned the entire Patterson gang in Portales."

He put a hand on O'Rourke's shoulder. "Hank, we need a man like you here in Boone Mesa. In short, we've come to offer you the position of Sheriff."

"Gentlemen," O'Rourke said. "I'm sure this is a singular honor; however . . ."

Mayor Perkins spoke grumpily. "There's nothing singular about it. We make the same offer to practically anybody who comes through town."

Culver frowned at him severely. Perkins sighed and looked away.

O'Rourke rubbed a finger at the corner of his smile. "How does it happen that the position is vacant?"

Culver put his hands under his coat and studied the floor for a moment. "The majority of our sheriffs resign after short periods of time."

Mayor Perkins nodded. "They prefer that to being buried."

Culver glared at him and then turned back to O'Rourke. "The job pays forty a month, plus room and board at the hotel."

O'Rourke shook his head. "My interests run more to cattle raising. As a matter of fact, I've been traveling around looking for a nice spread."

Culver cleared his throat. "To put it bluntly, Hank, this town is not in the best of condition. You have, no doubt, heard of Campbell and his men?"

"No," O'Rourke said.

Mayor Perkins brightened. "Good. We want this town cleaned up and we're willing to pay a bonus of five hundred dollars in gold to whoever can do it."

Culver agreed. "There are about three or four dangerous men disturbing our peace." He blushed slightly. "Well, perhaps a few more."

The five hundred dollars offer brought a haze of thoughtfulness to O'Rourke's eyes and Mayor Perkins saw it.

He acted swiftly and pinned a badge on O'Rourke's hickory shirt. "You are

hereby designated Sheriff of Boone Mesa by the power vested in me. Here are the keys to your office. If you have to leave town in a hurry just drop them off in the barber shop next door."

O'Rourke was about to protest, but then he grinned. "I might as well give it a try. Five hundred dollars can buy a lot of cows."

When they were gone, O'Rourke strapped on his .41 Colt Lightning and went downstairs for supper in the hotel dining room.

A pale-faced man with a thin mustache looked up as O'Rourke took a seat at his table. Curiosity flickered in his dark eyes as he took in the badge. He smiled slightly. "You're the seventh one with that job this year. You need work that bad?"

O'Rourke shrugged. "It's better than riding the grub line."

The dark-coated stranger put out his hand. "Slade Evans."

O'Rourke shook it. "Hank O'Rourke." He studied the stranger's bed-of-flowers waistcoat and the string tie for a moment before pouring himself coffee. "Who's this Campbell I hear talk about?"

Slade Evans cut a slice from the thick roast on the platter. "He owns most of the land around here and that means he nearly owns the town."

O'Rourke's eyes took in the other diners. "I notice that not many people around here wear guns."

Slade nodded. "There are always five or six of Campbell's men floating around town and they have their own ideas about entertainment. The people have learned that the best way to avoid trouble is not to pack a gun."

O'Rourke indicated the Walker .44 Slade wore. "You working for Campbell?"

A trace of regret came to Slade's eyes. "No. But I'm open to offers."

O'Rourke sipped his coffee. "In the meantime you're wearing a gun and not worried about getting killed? You got that good a reputation?"

Slade grinned, showing white teeth. "My trade's gambling and my reputation is in the way I look. I also let it get around that I got a .41 hideout gun up my sleeve and that I'm tricky as a rattler. It all helps."

In the morning, after breakfast O'Rourke went to the livery stable to check on the roan he had quartered there and then he took a stroll around the town he was supposed to clean up. A waddle wearing a gun stared at his badge and went past grinning.

At the Mercantile O'Rourke leaned idly against a post and watched a Mexican load a wagon with supplies.

A tall fair-haired girl in a divided riding skirt strode out of the store and began supervising the loading.

O'Rourke watched with interest.

She noticed him and beckoned imperiously with her riding crop. "You, over there. Hop to it and give Pedro a hand."

O'Rourke didn't move. Instead he made himself comfortable against the post.

The pink of irritation rose in her cheeks. "I'm not going to ask you again."

O'Rourke smiled. "It seems to me that you didn't rightly ask the first time."

Her eyes narrowed. "Perhaps you aren't aware who I am?"

O'Rourke nodded agreeably. "No. And I guess that you don't know me either."

She noticed the badge then and an expression of disdain came to her face. "I suppose you're another saddle bum."

O'Rourke's smile became a thing of hardness. "And I suppose you're a lady. Apparently we're both wrong."

Her eyes flashed and she came closer, a tight grip on the riding crop.

"I wouldn't use that thing," O'Rourke said quietly. "What would happen next might be embarrassing to you."

She became aware of the grinning spectators edging closer and bit her lower lip with impotent anger.

Abruptly she turned and stalked away to the palomino hitched at the rail. She untied the horse, swung into the saddle, and thundered down the dusty street.

Slade Evans appeared at O'Rourke's elbow. He pulled a panatella from his waistcoat pocket and bit off the tip. "For your information, that was Felicia Campbell, Campbell's daughter."

He indicated a gunhawk standing ten paces away. "That's Cal Phelan. He works for Campbell and it appears that he's thinking about getting a bonus."

Cal Phelan hitched up his belt and swaggered to a position in front of O'Rourke. "We don't treat ladies like that in this town, mister."

O'Rourke shook his head doubtfully. "Maybe you just lack initiative."

Phelan thought that over and refrained from scratching his head. He spat at the wooden sidewalk close to O'Rourke's boots. "When we see someone who treats a fine woman like you did, we do something about it."

O'Rourke rubbed his ear and decided that this was as good a time as any to begin cleaning up Boone City. "Mister," he said sadly, "it's my unfortunate duty to place you under arrest for threatening to disturb my peace of mind."

Phelan sneered. "I don't see how you're going to do that. You're just one man and in a fair fight I'm the fastest man with a gun around here."

O'Rourke lifted a surprised eyebrow. "Now who said it would be fair fight?" He indicated Slade with his thumb. "I want you to meet my deputy."

Slade choked on his cigar smoke.

"He wears all that black clothes because he likes to go to funerals," O'Rourke said. He turned to Slade. "How big a box would you say this boy would need?"

Slade was still having difficulty with his throat.

Phelan's eyes had gone to Slade and his mouth dropped slightly.

"Unhitch them gun belts, mister," O'Rourke said with stern authority. "I can't hold Slade back much longer."

Uncertainty found a home in Phelan's face as his eyes moved from Slade to O'Rourke and back again. He hesitated a few more moments and then backed down. "Hell, I'm not going to fight two men at a time. I don't aim to commit suicide."

O'Rourke slung the gunbelts over his shoulder and they strolled to the jailhouse.

After Phelan was locked up, Slade sat down and stared disconsolately at his boots. "I think I ought to move on to Tuscon. You ruined me for this town."

O'Rourke rummaged in a drawer until he found a deputy badge.

Slade pinned it on reluctantly. "I've never done a day's work in my life and this is a painful way to start. My Dad always said there'd be a white sheep in the family."

Late that afternoon Felicia Campbell stormed into the office and confronted Slade and O'Rourke. "You have one of my father's men in this filthy jail. I want him released immediately."

O'Rourke leaned back in his swivel chair. "How come your father couldn't do this chore himself?"

"Never mind," she snapped. "I was curious to see whether you'd been ridden out of town yet."

O'Rourke grinned. "I'm still here. Phelan's fine will be five dollars, plus another five for not having a license to carry a gun."

Felicia's eyes blazed. "I never heard anything so ridiculous. You don't need a license to carry a gun. And besides, you're not a judge. You can't fine anybody."

O'Rourke sighed sympathetically. "New laws."

Slade nodded gloomily. "Whole new constitution."

Felicia said several things in Spanish, all of which O'Rourke understood.

"Ma'am," he said, his voice mildly shocked. "I've got a good notion to spark you and I imagine it would hurt. It appears to me that you're not wearing a corset."

Felicia gasped and her face went crimson.

O'Rourke got slowly to his feet. "The notion is possessing me with springtime power. Just notice the glint in my eye."

She stood her ground until O'Rourke was four feet away, and then turned and fled through the door.

Inside his cell, Phelan leaned against the bars and spoke with slight envy. "Sheriff, you might not live long, but it looks like you're enjoying the time you got."

Campbell's foreman showed up the next morning with money to bail Phelan out. He dropped a letter on O'Rourke's desk as he left.

O'Rourke opened it: "It's from Campbell. He invites us for a feed at his ranch tonight."

Slade stood at his shoulder. "It reads more like he's telling us."

FEBRUARY, 1958

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They left town in the mid-afternoon and at six o'clock they pulled up on a rise that looked down on the valley Campbell made his headquarters. They saw a long, sprawling ranch house with a tile roof surrounded by green lawns, hay-barns, and sturdy, well-kept sheds.

Campbell was waiting at the corral. He was a big man, over six feet two. Gray tinged the black hair at his temples and his face was deeply tanned. "Glad to see both of you could make it. I'll show you where to wash up and we'll go into the house for dinner."

Fifteen minutes later they sat down at the low, polished mahogany table. On

the white lace tablecloth the tableware of engraved silver gleamed. The porcelain cups were thin, fragile and expensive.

They rose as Felicia Campbell swept into the room. She wore a blue-tinted, full-skirted gown that left her shoulders bare. Her pendant turquoise earrings sparkled in the candlelight.

She nodded slightly to Slade, but ignored O'Rourke.

Two Pueblo Indian girls began serving the meal.

Campbell indulged in small talk until the dinner was almost over. Then he met O'Rourke's eyes. "It seems, Mr. O'Rourke, that you have been causing my daughter

some embarrassment. Not that she has brought it to my attention, but a thing like that gets around."

He smiled. "I got together a dozen of my men this morning. We were going into town to see what could be done about that, but Felicia talked me out of it."

Felicia's eyes were cold. "I thought that things were sufficiently bad as they were without calling them to the attention of the entire Territory."

Campbell continued smiling. "There was also the matter of jailing one of my men. You know, of course, Mr. O'Rourke, I run things in this part of the country?"

O'Rourke nodded. "You think of it as your kingdom."

Campbell turned to Slade. "Tell me, Mr. Evans, do you approve of kingdoms?"

"No," Slade said. He tasted his goblet of wine and found it pleasing. "Unless I happen to be the king."

"Exactly," Campbell said. He turned back to O'Rourke. "And as a king, I cannot allow a threat to my kingdom. Even a minor threat." He smiled genially. "I suppose I could buy you? Felicia suggested that as a solution."

O'Rourke grinned quizzically and tried to catch Felicia's eye.

"I think I could," Campbell said. "But I'm not going to. It would set a bad precedent."

He folded his napkin. "Mr. O'Rourke, tomorrow afternoon at five o'clock I am coming into town with forty of my men. If they find you still there, I shouldn't be at all surprised if they decide to string you up." His voice remained pleasant. "Not that forty men are necessary for the job, but at the same time I intend to re-impress the townspeople with the fact that I have that many men at my disposal whenever I find need of them."

O'Rourke finally managed to catch Felicia's eyes. He thought he saw a faint regret.

Campbell turned to Slade. "That goes for you too, Mr. Evans."

"I was afraid of that," Slade said with a trace of melancholy. He brightened for a moment. "I can be bought, you know. It wouldn't set much of a precedent."

He shrugged when O'Rourke looked at him and grinned faintly. "Well, it was worth a try."

At nine the next morning Slade came to the office carrying a carpetbag. "I'm taking the noon stage out."

O'Rourke came out of his thoughtful haze. "Put down that damn yankee bag. I'd like a little help from you."

Slade sat down. "Until noon."

O'Rourke tilted his chair against the wall. "Most of the people in this town don't relish having Campbell running things, do they?"

"They don't like it, but they learned not to say so."

"How many people in this place?"

"About three hundred men, five ladies, and maybe fifteen women."

O'Rourke nodded. "And Campbell has about forty men." He stared into space for a while. "Name me three or four men here who stick pretty close together, Slade. I mean men who do their drinking, talking, and what not in a group."

Slade rubbed his head. "Well, there's Jim Hanks, Fred Dwyer, and Purdy Hart. They usually hang together." He winced at his choice of words.

O'Rourke got to his feet. "Let's see if we can find one of them alone."

Jim Hanks was in the corral behind the blacksmith shop, busy currying his skewbald.

"I hear you don't care much for Campbell, either," O'Rourke said.

Hanks stopped a stroke in mid-air.

"Who told you that? I don't want no trouble."

O'Rourke draped an elbow over the top rail. "Campbell's riding into town late this afternoon with trouble. We were wondering if you'd like to get in on the fun. The boys aim to send him back out with his tail between his legs."

Hanks whitened. "What boys?"

O'Rourke turned towards Slade. "How many we got now? Fifty-six, isn't it?"

Slade's eyes were blank for a moment and then they brightened with understanding. "Sixty-one, Sheriff. Five more came in to volunteer while you were having breakfast."

O'Rourke raised an eyebrow. "We don't want too many, Slade. Campbell's bringing only twenty men."

"They insisted, Sheriff. Practically got on their knees and begged."

O'Rourke pulled a notebook from his back pocket and consulted it. "Awful lot of men," he said dubiously. "I see we got Fred Dwyer. A good man." He frowned. "Who's this Purdy Hart? Is he dependable?"

"One of the best," Slade said. "A rock in time of distress."

Jim Hanks' jaw sagged. "Fred? And Purdy too?"

O'Rourke sighed. "Well, I guess you can forget about it then, Jim. We got enough men already." He began walking away.

Hanks trotted after him. "Now see here, Sheriff. When it comes to shooting, Fred and Purdy don't hold a candle to me. You got to deal me in on this."

O'Rourke shook his head doubtfully.

"Please, Sheriff." Slade's voice held a note of entreaty. "I can personally vouch for this man."

Jim Hanks held his breath while O'Rourke made a process of cogitating. Finally a slow smile came to O'Rourke's face and he put out his hand.

Hanks grasped it and pumped it up and down eagerly.

"Keep this to yourself," O'Rourke cautioned. "We don't want the whole town in on it. We meet in front of the Wagon Saloon at three o'clock."

When they were out of earshot, Slade grinned. "Fred Dwyer usually spends a lot of time at the barbershop. I guess we better get to him fast."

When O'Rourke and Slade returned to the office at noon, they had the names of thirty-three volunteers.

O'Rourke sat down to rest his feet. "That's enough of walking for today. Now we just sit here and wait."

The first two men came in only fifteen minutes later. One was tall and leather hard, and the other fair and with an unaccustomed determination on his face.

The tall man spoke. "I'm Harry Kline and this is Obbie Green."

"That's right," Obbie said, nodding.

"We want a part of this fracas."

"What fracas?" O'Rourke asked blankly.

"Now, Sheriff," Kline said irritably. "Don't go innocent on us. We heard what's going on."



"That's right," Obbie said.

O'Rourke folded his arms. "We're just taking men who aren't afraid of Campbell."

"Afraid of Campbell?" Kline roared. "I'll tear him apart with my bare hands!"

"That's right," Obbie said. "Me too."

O'Rourke signed them up and as they left Mayor Perkins came in carrying a double-barreled shotgun.

"I don't see why I'm the last to know," he complained, puffing a little. "I'm mayor of this town and if it's got to be protected, you have to let me do my share."

By three o'clock, O'Rourke had another thirty-six volunteers.

"Slade," he said, counting the names. "If there are twenty men in this town who don't show up for that meeting, it'll be because they're too sick or drunk."

O'Rourke and Slade left the office and found about one hundred and fifty men gathered in front of the Wagon Saloon, each of whom appeared delighted to see so many others who shared his bravery.

O'Rourke delayed another half an hour, allowing the gathering to swell to over two hundred men. Then he climbed to the top of a packing case and addressed the crowd.

"It does my heart good to know that we have among us so many men who will fearlessly rise to arms in the face of aggression."

There was a prolonged murmur of approval.

O'Rourke noticed more men flowing from the saloons down the street. The undertaker stood in the doorway of his establishment, a happy gleam in his eyes.

O'Rourke cleared his throat. "What the world has long known, you men are proving here again today." His voice rang. "And this is that no American can be stepped on by any tyrant, foreign or domestic."

There was considerable cheering.

O'Rourke's face became solemn. "I had expected Campbell to ride into town with twenty men, but my spies in the enemy's camp tell me that he's going to show up with forty."

This statement met with no enthusiasm.

O'Rourke smiled grimly. "That might scare the Yankees in this bunch, but it only whets the appetite of the Johnny Rebs."

He savored the Rebel yells with a degree of nostalgia.

O'Rourke held up his hand. "We may have had our minor differences in the past, but today we stand as one united."

"Indivisible," Slade shouted loudly.

O'Rourke's hand went up to quiet the demonstration. "I want all you Rebs to take positions on the south side of the street and all you damn . . . all you Yankees on the north side."

Slade tapped his arm. "Don't you think that's a little dangerous? They might start the war all over again."

O'Rourke stopped all movement. "On the other hand, I think we'd all better get on one side of the street. The south!"

The crowd broke up into groups and

began hustling barrels and crates to the boardwalks on the south side.

Within a half an hour, the men were in their positions and silence settled upon the town. Except for Slade and O'Rourke, the street was deserted.

The minutes dragged and then they heard the beating of a horse's hoofs in the distance.

Slade licked his lips. "This is a good time for us to take cover."

"Hold it, Slade," O'Rourke said. "That's only a single mount."

The palomina was pulled down to a trot at the outskirts of town and Felicia Campbell brought the horse to a halt in front of O'Rourke.

Her light hair was windblown and she was breathing hard as she swung off the saddle. "I thought you'd have sense enough to leave town."

O'Rourke smiled happily. "But you wanted to make sure. There's a bond between us if you'll just look at this whole thing objectively."

"You're a fool," she said coldly. "This is no time for heroics. Dad is only fifteen minutes behind me."

Slade hooked his thumbs in his gun belt. "We will not be trampled on by tyrants," he said firmly. "Foreign or domestic."

Felicia paid no attention to him. "Dad always means what he says." Her tone tried to convey that she exceedingly begrimed the next sentence. "I'd really hate to see you hanged."

O'Rourke grinned. "Well, if you're sensitive, you can always close your eyes. But on the other hand, I don't think you've got too much to worry about."

Her eyes widened as she became aware of segments of O'Rourke's army rising from their hiding places to stare curiously.

She gasped. "It's a trap! Dad won't stand a chance." She turned swiftly to swing back into the saddle of her mount, but O'Rourke seized her wrist. She kicked and screamed as O'Rourke slung her over his shoulder and carried her to the jailhouse.

He deposited her in a cell.

She rattled the bars futilely. "You can't do it, O'Rourke. You know it would be murder."

O'Rourke regarded her. "I'd call it self-defense."

She spoke more quietly. "Not this way, O'Rourke. If Dad is killed, it would always be murder to me."

Their eyes met and held for half a minute.

O'Rourke moved to the door. "I'll see what I can do. But it's still up to your father to decide what he wants."

He went outside and raised his voice. "There'll be no shooting unless they start it. Now get back under cover and stay there until I touch the brim of my hat. Then get to your feet and let Campbell see how many of us there are. The rest is up to him."

The men sank back into their hiding places and stillness returned once more to Boone Mesa.

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Ten minutes later the sound of a large body of riders came from the west.

"If you don't mind," Slade said uneasily, "I'm getting behind something solid." He ambled for his sanctuary as fast as a man can walk and still appear casual about it.

The forty horsemen trailed a cloud of dust as they came in sight at the edge of town. Campbell, on a claybank, raised his hand and brought them to a halt.

He surveyed the street—empty except for O'Rourke—with a momentary uncertainty and then gestured with his arm and the body of men cantered into town behind him.

Campbell stopped fifteen feet in front of O'Rourke and lounged against the pommel of his saddle. "I hate to hang a stupid man, O'Rourke, but on the other hand, I suppose that a little culling improves the herd."

He viewed O'Rourke with a touch of sadness and sighed. "I'll give you another half an hour to get out of town, but that's the limit."

"Before we go any further," O'Rourke said, "I think there's something you ought to know." He touched the brim of his hat."

O'Rourke's army rose to its feet with a creak of leather and the stamping of feet as circulation was restored to cramped limbs.

Campbell's shoulders stiffened and behind him his riders stirred uneasily. A few of the horses skittered.

Campbell took a half minute to estimate his opposing forces and glanced back at his men for reassurance. "I've got forty of the meanest waddies in the Territory behind me, O'Rourke. I don't think we'll have much trouble with your storekeepers and nesters."

O'Rourke forced a smile. "You know you're only fooling yourself." He exaggerated slightly both in quantity and quality. "You don't stand a chance against four hundred picked men."

O'Rourke decided that this was an appropriate moment to appear nonchalant. He brought out cigarette makings from his shirt pocket and began filling a paper.

"Twenty of my men have been assigned just one target. I imagine you can guess who that is."

Campbell stared at O'Rourke's men again and then set his jaw. "We've all got to die some time."

"Don't we, though?" O'Rourke agreed. "Still, we like to put it off as long as possible."

O'Rourke crimped one end of his cigarette and put it in his mouth. "Just what is it you want, Campbell? You've got money and land and that ought to be enough for any man. But you can't be a king, Campbell. Not in this country. A man with a twenty-foot garden is as tall as one with a hundred thousand acres."

Campbell smiled grimly. "Don't try to talk me out of this. You don't have to do me that favor."

O'Rourke cocked his head and looked up. "What about your daughter? Sure, you'll leave everything you have to her, but can she take care of it, or even herself, in this country?"

That got closer to Campbell than anything O'Rourke had said before and Campbell showed it.

O'Rourke pried further into the chink in Campbell's armor. "What kind of a life do you think she'd have all alone? And suppose she got married? Suppose she married somebody like Slade Evans. How long do you think your money would last then? And after that, what would happen to Felicia?"

Campbell kept his eyes on O'Rourke for a long minute. Then he exhaled and turned in the saddle. "Parker!" he roared. "Get these men back to the ranch and see that they all get back to work."

Campbell watched them go and shook his head. He dismounted tiredly. "Mr. O'Rourke, I could use a drink." He looked at O'Rourke's open-mouthed army and grinned faintly. "The first round is on me, gentlemen."

The sideline army burst into a cheer and made a dash for the nearest saloons.

Inside one of them O'Rourke clinked glasses with Campbell.

Slade leaned on the bar, brooding. "You didn't have to use me for a bad example, Sheriff. Felicia could do a lot worse than marrying me."

O'Rourke snapped his fingers. "That reminds me. I think we'd better get your daughter out of jail, Mr. Campbell."

At noon the next day, Slade came into the office, walking gingerly to favor a splitting headache.

O'Rourke picked his stetson off the desk. "The leading citizens are satisfied that Boone Mesa is going to be quieter from now on. I've been paid off and I'm leaving."

Slade nodded. "I know."

O'Rourke studied him and frowned. "Somehow you look different this morning."

"I shaved off my mustache," Slade went to the mirror. "I'm the new Sheriff. I didn't think my gambler-type mustache looked right for the job." He studied his reflection critically. "I could use a sun tan too."

O'Rourke slung his blanket roll over his shoulder.

"You heading west?" Slade asked.

"Just a few miles. Campbell made me his foreman."

Slade accompanied him outside to his horse. "You got money now. Why not buy cows of your own?"

"I'll try this for a while. I think I could use the experience."

Slade nodded. "That's a pretty good reason. Also I understand that Campbell's got a pretty daughter."

"Somehow I noticed that." O'Rourke fastened the roll behind his saddle and then shook hands with Slade.

Slade tried out his stern sheriff's expression. "I don't want any trouble from your hands, foreman. I got a jail that can be filled."

A twinkle came into O'Rourke's eyes. "Suppose I ride into town with forty men at my back?"

Slade grinned. "It won't do you any good. I got four hundred picked men to call on any time I want them."

O'Rourke saluted casually and rode into the west. ■■

THE DAY DEATH CAME TO TRENTON CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

in contrast to the Major's fierce mustache. "You worry too much, Major. I tell you this verdamnt weather is our best guard!"

Lieutenant Colonel Scheffer, brigade second-in-command, came over.

"Those strong points you approved yesterday, Colonel, there is still time to fortify them. We can use the two guns in front of headquarters."

"Of course we can, Franz. Tomorrow!"

Scheffer and von Dechow exchanged a worried glance.

Rall shook his head, the fumes of the Jersey "blitzen" rising in his brain.

"Gentlemen, we don't need trenches for the Foxhunter and his country clowns!"

Putting an arm about each of them he led them back to the table.

"Remember what that Englishman,

Grant said when I told him I needed more troops? That he could keep the peace in Jersey with a corporal's guard!"

Laughing good naturedly, Rall filled their glasses for them.

Colonel Rall was not alone in his contempt for the fighting prowess of the Foxhunter from Virginia and his ragged men. Along with chubby Lord Cornwallis, he shared the professional soldier's scorn of Washington's "rabble in arms." Up to now there was no reason on God's frozen earth why he should have felt otherwise. He had seen the Yankees throw down their guns and run at Long Island when the Hessians came out of the fog. He had seen them pinned, whimpering, to the trees—and joined in the Hessian battle cry: "Yonkee! Yonkee!" as his men drove their bayonets into the backs of General

Sullivan's men. Sullivan himself had been captured by a trio of grinning Jagers, along with Stirling and 2,000 of their soldiers.

And then, just this last November, at Fort Washington on the Hudson, the Colonel had led the assault in cold steel, barely missing Washington himself by fifteen minutes. That close he was to making good his boast!

"I swear," Rall said before going overseas, "that I will catch this rebel, Washington, and take his head to England."

Colonel Johann Gottlieb, in his late thirties now, had been a soldier since he was sixteen. Broad-shouldered, clean-shaven, without the fierce mustache sported by most of his men, he had the ruddy complexion of the outdoorsman and the build of a man who—by hard